

The Voter

The Co-Presidents' Report

Another year has flown by, and you will notice that you are holding the last Voter of 2011 and the first of 2012! The coming year promises to be a very active one for the League. With the 2012 election approaching, we will be working to ensure that no registered voters are disenfranchised by the new Tennessee Voter Photo ID law.

We'll also conduct voter registrations and candidate forums. At voting times we will be observing the polls for procedural problems. We will continue watching and reporting on the meetings of the City Council and City boards. During Breakfast With Our Legislators, on the fourth Monday of the months when the Tennessee legislature is in session, we will be able to hear and question our legislators.

We have a full schedule of interesting speakers at Lunch with the League. On January 3 **Ben Harrington**, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association of East Tennessee, will discuss mental health issues and their legal, societal, and workplace ramifications. On January 17, **Dr. Robert Foresta** will talk about the future of the European Union. Through it all, we will be mindful of membership recruitment and encouraging people to join the League in our important work.

On the national level, LWVUS is actively advocating for clean air and water, open and civil government, voting rights for all citizens, and health care reform. We will be watching these developments and advocating for these issues with our national representatives as our League issues action alerts.

Before the new year begins, however, let's pause and be thankful for our families, friends, and freedoms. We wish you a peaceful and joyful Holiday Season.

"There are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations." ~James Madison

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Precision Printing and Graphics supports the League of Women Voters of Oak Ridge by printing and folding *The Voter*. Thanks!

Y-12 Federal Credit Union funds the postage for *The Voter*. Thanks!



Brenda Parker and Jo Ann Garrett

League Committees:

Education and Voting Mechanics Committees



During the November meetings both committees had some ideas for a short speech about the Voter ID law. The Voting Mechanics Committee came up with an outline for the speech and is working to polish and refine it.

In January we plan to start our blitz of various local organizations to get everyone thinking about Voter ID and finding the people who are directly affected. We will help those we can and we will find help for everyone who needs a government (state or federal) issued photo ID so that they can vote.

The Education and Voting Mechanics committees are on holiday during December. The Education Committee meets Monday, January 9 at MMC Secret City Café at 3 p.m. The Voting Mechanics Committee will meet Wednesday, January 18 at the Midtown Community Center at 3 p.m.

If you can suggest some organizations where one of the committee members can give a 3-5 minute presentation, please send the names to **Norman Mulvenon**, 482-3153, mulvenon@juno.com.

Lunch with the League



On December 6, **Dr. Michael Fitzgerald**, Senior Teaching Fellow at [The Howard H. Baker, Jr. Center](#); Chair, American Studies Program and Professor of Political Science at UT, spoke about, "The Winter of Our Discontent: American Political Culture and the 2012 National Election."

On January 3, **Ben Harrington**, Executive Director of the Mental Health Association of East Tennessee will discuss mental health issues and their legal,

societal, and workplace ramifications. He will also address intervention and training of local police officers, and will include a few case studies.

On January 17, **Dr. Ronald Foresta**, University of Tennessee Department of Geography Professor, will discuss, "The European Union: Where does it go from here?"

Sandwich lunches are available from the [Sweet Café](#) in Clinton. No reservations are required, and we provide coffee, water, and iced tea.

Breakfast with the Legislators

Breakfast with the Legislators will resume **Monday, January 23**, from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. in the Civic Center Social Room. This is an opportunity to meet your legislators and share your ideas and concerns.

Breakfasts will continue on the fourth Monday of each month that the Legislature meets. The League, with cosponsor WSI Oak Ridge, hosts the discussion with our area Tennessee legislators.

If the schools are closed for snow or inclement weather, the breakfast will be cancelled.

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and works to increase understanding of public policy through unbiased studies of public issues. Attendance at LWVOR events is open to the public. Membership is open to both men and women. Please visit our website: www.lwvoakridge.org.

Observer Corps

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board

October 13 meeting:

The wide-ranging discussion focused on maintenance of Haw Ridge, locations of bike racks, the Parks Board work plan, and the waterfront pavilion.

Steve Dittner, who is active in maintaining the Haw Ridge trails, led the discussion regarding damage to the trails caused by horses after bouts of bad weather. He emphasized the need for a city policy to keep the trails safe and accessible for all recreational users.

Priorities will be set for the Board work plan. Important ones include: bicycle racks located throughout the city, starting with the core of the city (Briarcliff to Lafayette); the Cedar Hill park area (two grants have been received from Playful City, USA and a “play event” is under consideration); and the waterfront pavilion. Josh Collins indicated that the City Manager is eager to proceed with the Master Plan and the geological survey. The proposed work plan should be completed by January.

The Parks Board hosted an open house focusing on maps and plans for the waterfront pavilion. Two simple architectural plans were presented and were also posted on the Board’s web site. The Board is soliciting public comment on the plans.

~ **Bobbe Smith** for **Mary Lou Daugherty**, Observer

Oak Ridge City Council

At the *November 14* meeting, Oak Ridge City Council

1. Heard two citizens complain about unsightly neighborhoods and lack of code enforcement, heard one citizen congratulate city officials on their performance in Mexico, and heard one citizen

express thanks for increased police patrols in his neighborhood.

2. Presented Four Star Awards from the Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association to Matt Reedy (for Graduation Celebration), Jon Hetrick (for Cedar Hill Park construction project), Chuck Hope, Jr., and the City for Excellence in Recreation and Parks.

3. Swore in City Clerk Diana R. Stanley.

4. Heard reports on the Oak Ridge Railroad Authority from Gordon Fee, on the recent National League of Cities meeting from Council members Ellen Smith and David Mosby, and on the City’s new Snow Plan using pre-treatment with a salt brine solution similar to that used on State highways and interstates from Public Works Director Gary Cinder.

5. Approved resolutions:

a. adopting an Inter-local Agreement between the City of Oak Ridge and Anderson, Knox, Loudon, Meigs, Morgan, Rhea, and Roane counties to cooperate on issues related to DOE’s Management Program and Emergency Management Activities.

b. rescinding Resolution 10-98-11 opposing the Local Oversight Committee’s dissolution until certain conditions were met and preventing the Mayor from voting for dissolution until these conditions are met.

c. adopting a debt management policy as required by the Tennessee State Funding Board.

d. adopting the Not in Our City conceptual plan to address drugs and crime, improve housing, and make Oak Ridge a better place to live and invest.

e. adopting the Residential Properties Utility Program—an inspection program that establishes firmer guidelines for properties that have a change in ownership and/or occupancy. The program

would use HUD Housing Choice Program guidelines for instituting minimum standards that must be met prior to establishment of a utility account.

f. awarding a bid for ~\$33K for 3 phase spacer cable system; awarding a bid for ~\$187K for underground power cable; authorizing purchase of a hydraulic excavator for ~\$333K; accepting a settlement of \$44K with Carolina Transformer Contribution Action Plaintiffs to avoid Federal litigation for a leaking transformer the City sent to Carolina Transformer in the 1970s or 1980s for proper disposal.

g. authorizing the City to enter into a contract with the State of Tennessee Department of Transportation for resurfacing city streets using \$1.2M of the City's allocated surface transportation program funds matched with ~\$301K in city funds.

6. Approved 3 ordinances after first reading:

a. amending use restrictions in the Woodland Town Center to allow restaurants that provide drive-through service but retain a higher character than fast food and/or quick service restaurants.

b. and c. amending zoning in the Heritage Center.

7. Approved 5 ordinances after second reading:

a. increasing the city court clerk fee from \$59 to \$81.25.

b. changing the zoning district of certain parcels at the former K-25 site.

c. updating Floodplain Regulations as required by law.

d. eliminating zone RG-1, Residential Open Space and Reserved, on the south side of Emory Valley Road where it was used inappropriately as a buffer strip.

e. covering zoning housekeeping changes accumulated over 1 year.

~Mary Uziel, Observer

EQAB

November 3 EQAB meeting: Highlights from the latest DOE Public Involvement News were mentioned (organizational changes and the budget effect on the pace of local cleanup operations).

A draft of the, "Commercial Revitalization of Oak Ridge—a Pilot Project" was discussed. The criteria for project site selection were described, with a possible recommendation of Grove Center.

Since ORHS Representatives were not present, Jimmy Groton reported that SAIC has contributed \$2000 for the wetlands project, and that a DOE contribution is possible.

Athanasia Lewis reported that the City tree planting has been delayed because of possible mercury contamination. She also said that information on the citywide bike ride on November 5 is available on the City website.

There was an extensive discussion of the EQAB organization and functioning. Completion of the review of EQAB By-laws and changes to EQAB practices are dependent on revisions to the City Code of Ordinances establishing the board (Section 2-102, Chapter 2, Article V). Probable recommendations are: vacant board seats should not be considered in determining a quorum; and the annual report to City Council should not necessarily include a proposed program of work for the ensuing year.

~Lou Arnold, Observer

December 1 EQAB meeting: The meeting agenda and the minutes of the November 3 meeting were approved. A draft of the Tennessee Oversight Interlocal Agreement (TOIA) was discussed at length. The introductory paragraph states, "Between the Counties of Anderson, Knox, Loudon, Meigs, Morgan, Rhea, Roane, along with the City of Oak Ridge to Cooperate on Issues Related to the U.S. Department of Energy's Environmental Management Program and Emergency Management Activities." However, the draft shows signature opportunity for only Anderson, Loudon, Morgan, and Roane counties.

The Tennessee Oversight Agreement (TOA) between the State and DOE, established in May 1991 and extended through June 30, 2016, is cited. The TOIA would meet regularly regarding DOE and State activities pursuant to the TOA. It is expected that EQAB and the Roane County Environmental Board would continue to function. An EQAB seat on the TOIA board is not planned; but technical knowledge would be needed.

The City Staff representative reported that planned changes to City ordinances may delay appointments to boards and commissions, and that the City Manager and staff are interested in work plans matching City goals. She also stated that the Climate Action Plan is high on the City priority list.

Chuck Agle summarized the status of plans for a Woodland commercial development along Illinois Avenue, including a long-range possibility for a shopping district in the area of the closed Ford distributorship.

Pat Imperato discussed plans for Arbor Day, scheduled for March 2, 2012. In the past, this activity has been coordinated by the UT Arboretum Society.

The possibility of revitalizing the Environmental Quality Award program was discussed briefly. Businesses would be nominated and selected, providing a positive element similar to the City beautification program in the past.

~Lou Arnold, Observer

Anderson County Commission

This was a long meeting, but there were a number of issues of special concern to League members.

Director of Schools, Larry Foster, thanked Commission members for attending the ground breaking for the new Alternative School. The LEARN Center has formed a partnership with TVA. Carah Beals Ferry from the Center described a new outdoor classroom below the TVA's Norris Dam that TVA and the Center have created.

The schools are giving random drug tests to students who participate in extracurricular activities. Students must sign a waiver allowing the tests if they wish to take part in these programs. To date 25 students have been tested and all tests have been negative. The testing program will cost \$28,000 this year.

There was a discussion of the use of about \$70,000 of the capital improvement bond money to update the phone system in the schools. This was not part of the original list of projects to be paid for with the bond. The bond purchaser paid a premium because the schools have such an excellent bond rating. This premium will be used to pay for the update. Commission okayed the expenditure.

The schools received a \$10,000 donation to pay for flu shots that the Health Department assisted in delivering.

Help Wanted

The schools have contracted with a private, for-profit company to bring a mobile dental clinic to all but three county schools. Art Miller, Director of the Health Department, explained that the department delivers free dental services to Lake City, Briceville, and the alternative school students.

County Mayor, Myron Iwanski, announced that Johnny Beeler will manage construction of the new jail. He has a two-year part time contract.

Mayor Iwanski reviewed the continuing discussions about where to put the Glen Alpine convenience center. Commission voted to go forward with the appeal in Chancery Court of Clinton's denial of County's request to upgrade the current facility. Mayor Iwanski suggested that the center be moved to the David Jones Industrial Park. The move will cost \$300,000-350,000 and would be paid for in part by proceeds from the sale of current center site.

The Legislative Committee report was presented by Chair Jerry Creasey. The Committee had prepared a resolution on Commission compliance with the state's Open Meetings Act. The resolution was defeated 12 to 4, with Legislative Committee members, including Chair Creasey, voting against it. Commissioners voice the opinion that it was toothless, and referred the problem to the Rules Committee. Commissioner Meredith moved that the Rules Committee consider abolishing all committees and conducting all commission business at two open meetings per month. The motion passed.

~Willa Reister, Observer

Observers:

We need volunteers to be observers at meetings of the [Roane County Commission](#) and the [Oak Ridge School Board](#). Is anyone willing to do this? No public speaking skills are required; just the ability to listen and take notes.

Remember: Items of interest to the League and the general public may be buried in long newspaper articles about local governmental meetings or, even worse, not reported at all. This is why our League's Observer Corps work is so important.

Please volunteer—more hands (and ears) make lighter work and more transparent government. Contact **Jo Ann Garrett**, Observer Corps Coordinator to sign up, **483-4466**.

TN Climate Action Campaign:

Mary Headrick has volunteered to be the Knox area contact to build a team with the [TN Climate Action Campaign](#) and help people get TVA/KUB audits. She is looking for someone to serve as an organizer for the Oak Ridge area. League membership is not required. Contact **Jo Ann Garrett** or **Brenda Parker** if you're interested or know someone who is.

Voter Registration at Oak Ridge High School:

We need several workers to help with Voter Registration at Oak Ridge High School on January 12, 2012, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Call **Carol Plasil** (483-4871), **Hella Peterson** (483-6262) or **Norman Mulvenon** (482-3153) if you can help.



League Speak

Curious Georgia asks: I heard League members talking about an 'Action Alert.' What's that?

Answer: The national and state LWVs have positions on various public policy issues that articulate their point of view. When legislation about an issue on which the League has a position is being formulated or voted, the LWVUS or state league may issue an Action Alert, which is a request that members contact their elected representatives, the media and the public in support of the League position.

Now you know!



Snow Policy

In case of inclement weather that closes the Oak Ridge schools, League meetings for that day are cancelled. For a public meeting, we'll try to inform people through the media, but check schools first. If schools are starting late, we'll continue with our programs. Above all, be safe and use your best judgement!

Membership Notes

New & Renewing Members - Welcome!

Elanta and David Vogt
117 Outer Dr.
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
865-482-2559

Joye Montgomery
102 Halstead Court
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
865-483-6956 (h), 482-4432 (w)

Please contact **Janis Williams**, keeper of our membership records, janisor@bellsouth.net or 483-1219, with membership corrections and updates.

I want to join the League of Women Voters

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State and Zip _____

Phone (Day / Work) _____

Phone(Evening) _____

Email _____

Individual annual dues _____ \$50

Household annual dues _____ \$75

*Donation to Education Fund \$ _____

**Make a separate, tax deductible check payable to LWVEF*

Please send this form and your dues, payable to:

LWV of Oak Ridge

P.O. Box 4073

Oak Ridge, TN 37831

~ In Memoriam ~

We extend our sympathies to the family of
Barry Beck.



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Calendar

December

15 Bill of Rights Day

January

3 Lunch with the League* 11:45, lunch; 12-1: Ben Harrington, Executive Director, Mental Health Association of East Tennessee. Topic: Mental health issues: legal, societal, and workplace ramifications.

9 Education Committee 3 p.m., Secret City Cafe, Methodist Medical Center

10 Board Meeting* 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

17 Lunch with the League* 11:45, lunch; 12-1: Dr. Ronald Foresta, Professor, University of Tennessee Department of Geography. Topic: "The European Union: Where does it go from here?"

18 Voting Mechanics 3 p.m., Local Oversight Committee Office, Midtown Community Center

23 Breakfast with the Legislators 7:30 - 8:30 a.m., Social Room, Oak Ridge Civic Center

February

7 Lunch with the League* 11:45, lunch; 12-1: Speaker TBD

14 Board Meeting* 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

* Unless otherwise specified, Lunch with the League is in the Social Hall, Unitarian Universalist Church, Oak Ridge Turnpike at Robertsville Road. Board Meetings are in the Main Conference Room, UT Resource Center, Rutgers Ave. at the Turnpike.